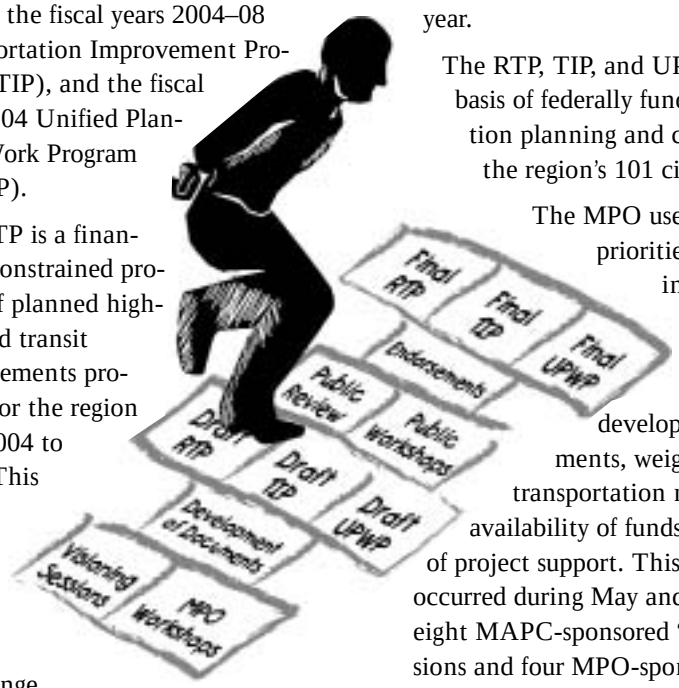
AUGUST 2003

TRANSREPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MPO Documents Move to Next Step: Draft Plan, TIP, and Work Program Available; Public Workshops Scheduled

On July 24, the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization approved the distribution of the drafts of three documents for a 30-day public comment period: the 2004–25 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the fiscal years 2004–08 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the fiscal year 2004 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).



The RTP is a financially constrained program of planned highway and transit improvements proposed for the region from 2004 to 2025. This new version of the MPO's long-range plan incorporates the results of staff's recently completed environmental justice systems-level analysis, conducted in consultation with the MPO's Environmental Justice Committee.

The TIP is a federally mandated, financially constrained, five-year program of improvements to the metropolitan area's transportation system. In the FY 2004–08 TIP, the Boston MPO has programmed approximately $958 million in projects for implementation.

The UPWP programs $5.2 million for surface transportation planning studies and other transportation-related activities to be conducted by the Boston MPO staff during federal fiscal year 2004. It also provides information on studies to be conducted by other transportation agencies and academic institutions in that year.

The RTP, TIP, and UPWP form the basis of federally funded transportation planning and construction for the region's 101 cities and towns.

The MPO used the ideas and priorities expressed by individuals during a public outreach period to develop the draft documents, weighing regional transportation needs against the availability of funds and the levels of project support. This outreach period occurred during May and June, when eight MAPC-sponsored "visioning" sessions and four MPO-sponsored public workshops were held throughout the region.

Further opportunities for public input will occur this month. There will be two MPO workshops, each with two sessions, in Waltham and Mattapan, and an all-day open house at the State Transportation Building in Boston. See the box in the next column for details. Each workshop session will begin with a presentation and continue with informal group discussions. On the open-house day, members of the public will be welcome to drop in at the MPO office at any time to talk with MPO members and staff and learn more about the processes and methodologies used to develop the documents.

MPO WORKSHOPS

Monday, August 18 – Waltham Government Center

Thursday, August 21 – Mattapan Community Development Corporation

MPO OPEN HOUSE

Tuesday, August 19 – State Transportation Building, Boston

(See meeting calendar on page 4 for details.)

The documents are available on CD-ROM, in print, and in accessible formats. Contact the Boston MPO at (617) 973-7100 or at publicinformation@ctps.org to request a copy of any or all of the documents. They may also be downloaded from the Boston MPO Web site at www.bostonmpo.org. Comments on the documents may be sent to the Boston MPO Chairman, c/o CTPS, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116, or e-mailed to publicinformation@ctps.org. To be given a response that will be incorporated in the final document, written comments must be received by 5:00 P.M. on August 27.

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The members of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): Executive Office of Transportation and Construction • City of Boston • City of Everett • City of Newton • City of Salem • Federal Highway Administration • Federal Transit Administration • Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority • Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board • Massachusetts Highway Department • Massachusetts Port Authority • Massachusetts Turnpike Authority • Metropolitan Area Planning Council • Regional Transportation Advisory Council • Town of Bedford • Town of Framingham • Town of Hopkinton

Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization Activities

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Action Items

At an all-day meeting on July 24 that included two and a half hours of public comment, the Boston MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee approved the distribution of the following three documents for a 30-day comment period:

- The draft 2004–25 Regional Transportation Plan
- The draft fiscal year 2004 Unified Planning Work Program
- The draft fiscal years 2004–08 Transportation Improvement Program

See the article on page one for descriptions of the documents and information on how to obtain copies.

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Update

At the July Advisory Council meeting, Tom Lisco of the Central Transportation Planning Staff gave a presentation on the growth of traffic congestion on express highways in metropolitan Boston from 1970 to the present. Using ratios of historic daily traffic volumes to the practical capacities of the highways as a measure of conditions, Mr. Lisco showed on a series of maps the locations and levels of severity of congestion in 10-year increments from 1970 to 2000. Using information from the Regional Transportation Plan, he then modeled highway congestion for the years 2004 and 2025. Members heard about the many factors, such as economic growth, supplies of gasoline, and increases in auto ownership, that have contributed to congestion and discussed whether changes in transportation or land use behavior (such as transferring truck freight to rail or increasing telecommuting) might slow the growth of congestion.

In August the Council will formulate comments on the certification documents, hear reports from its representatives on the Environmental Justice Committee and the MBTA Service Standards Committee, and discuss past experience with and future potential for the Design/Build method of project development in the commonwealth.

The Council is planning three field trips: an MBTA-sponsored tour of the Inner Harbor, a walk along the Southwest Corridor Park sponsored by WalkBoston and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (formerly MDC), and a tour of Central Artery/Tunnel construction. Details will be announced when they are available.

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT} Update

At the July AACT meeting, Siemens Transportation Systems USA gave a presentation to members on the public address–variable-message-sign system that will be installed on 578 MBTA low-floor buses and trackless trolleys. The MBTA is seeking input on the new system. Comments may be directed to AACT, c/o CTPS, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116, or to aact@ctps.org, for forwarding to the MBTA.

Following the meeting, members participated in a demonstration of the MBTA's new 60-foot articulated, low-floor, CNG bus outside the Transportation Building. Over the course of the summer, 44 of these vehicles will be delivered.

The MBTA's new low-floor, articulated, CNG bus, manufactured by Neoplan

FY 2004 Transportation Spending Bill Approved by House Committee

On July 24 the U.S. House Appropriations Committee approved the FY 2004 Transportation and Treasury Spending Bill. The bill was substantially revised from an earlier version approved by the Transportation and Treasury Appropriations Subcommittee on July 11 that had received criticism from the American Planning Association and other organizations for shifting transit and enhancement funds into highway spending and for the extent of its cuts in Amtrak funding.

The approved bill restores $600 million for the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program that had been cut by the earlier version. However it effects a major policy change by making the program discretionary. Under the new provision, states would be allowed to spend TE allocations for other transportation projects, including roads. Massachusetts congressman John Olver offered an amendment leaving the enhancements program as it has been since authorized by ISTEA in 1991, but it was defeated by a 29-33 vote. Congressman Olver stated that the matter of how enhancements funding is spent should be determined by the authorizing committees. An amendment to restore mandatory spending requirements for enhancements is likely to be offered when the full House considers the bill.

The bill provides more funds to Amtrak and transit than did the earlier version. It gives $900 million to Amtrak—up from $580 million in the original subcommittee bill but short of the $1.8 billion requested by Amtrak. Last year, Amtrak received $1.05 billion.

The bill's New Starts transit program authorization is $136 million higher than last year's. Overall, the new bill's transit spending is $7.2 billion. Transit received $7.2 billion in FY03, while the subcommittee's bill provided $7.1 billion for transit in FY04. The final measure

■ FY 2004 Appropriations *cont. on p. 4*

Shuttle Services Ease Summer Congestion and Parking Woes

Whether it's the Logan Airport Water Shuttle or the MBTA's newly instituted festival bus shuttle service, there is no question but that such services help not only to provide relief from congestion and parking woes, but also to reduce the level of air pollution, which is quite often worse during the summer, particularly in urban neighborhoods.

Park-and-Ride Services for Franklin Park Festivals

Festival planners, city officials, and the MBTA have collaborated this year in an effort to ease the traffic impact of Franklin Park festivals on neighborhoods in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Jamaica Plain.

The services being offered to festival-goers started with the Puerto Rican Festival, which took place from July 25 through July 27, and will continue for the Dominican Festival of August 8 through 10 and the Caribbean Carnival of August 23. The services consist of free satellite parking at—and free shuttle service from—the following locations:

- The Boston Public Schools lot located behind the Reggie Lewis Center on Columbus Avenue in Roxbury.
- Two Roxbury Community College parking lots on Columbus Avenue in Roxbury.
- The MBTA Forest Hills Station parking lot on Washington Street in Jamaica Plain.
- The FitzInn parking lot at the corner of Washington Street and the Arborway.

While the MBTA has provided free shuttle service for events such as the city's Fourth of July and First Night celebrations for some time, this is the first year that shuttle service has been provided for events at Franklin Park. Combined, the festivals are expected to draw more than one million people.

Logan Airport Water Shuttle Service

Operated by Massport, the Logan Airport Water Shuttle runs six days a week between Rowes Wharf and Logan Dock. Massport also provides free bus transportation (Route 66) between Logan Dock and all airport terminals. The service runs every 20 minutes from 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. on Monday through Friday and from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. on Saturdays. The adult fare is $10, the fare for seniors is $5, and children under 12 travel for free.

For information on other water shuttle services that serve Logan Airport, visit the Massport Web site at www.massport.com or call 1-800-23-LOGAN.

Task Force to Make Changes to State Highway Design Manual

Governor Mitt Romney's "Communities First" transportation policy, announced in January, is being applied to the state's Highway Design Manual. The general idea of the policy is to give communities more flexibility and input in designing local road and bridge projects in order both to help preserve the character of cities and towns and to cut through red tape. "Local residents are most familiar with the unique qualities that make their communities special," Governor Romney stated. "We [the administration] will make every effort to empower them in the decisions that directly impact their everyday lives."

Under the "Communities First" policy, local communities are given more control over their own finances. In addition, the policy called for the review of state highway design guidelines and collaboration between state highway officials and local leaders in the design process of projects. Specific actions to be taken include the following:

- Review and revise the Massachusetts Highway Department's Highway Design Manual to incorporate the principles of "Communities First" by October 1, 2003, establishing an advisory committee composed of representatives from municipalities and regional planning councils, as well as MassHighway, to assist in this process.
- Appoint an ombudsman in the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction to serve as a liaison addressing community concerns.
- Provide increased accommodation and consideration for design changes that provide for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

The advisory committee created was the Highway Design Task Force, a 26-member group composed of local, regional, and state transportation and planning officials. The task force held its organizing meeting in April and is currently working to develop a new highway design manual. All components of the existing manual are being reviewed, including procedures, pavement widths, pedestrian safety, and traffic calming. Future issues of *TRANSreport* will give updates on this process.

Meeting Calendar

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings this month. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting locations.

At the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Thursday, August 7

Boston MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Workshop — 10:00 A.M.
MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150

MBTA Board of Directors — 1:00 P.M.
Conference Room 2/3

Wednesday, August 13

Boston MPO Environmental Justice Committee — 10:00 A.M.
MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150

Regional Transportation Advisory Council — 3:00 P.M.
Conference Room 1

Tuesday, August 19

Boston MPO All-Day Open House (9:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M.)
MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150
(See related article on page 1.)

Thursday, August 21

Boston MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee — 10:00 A.M.
MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150

Wednesday, August 27

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) — 1:00 P.M.
Conference Room 2

At Other Boston-Area Locations

Monday, August 4

Chinatown/Leather District Central Artery Advisory Committee — 6:00 P.M.
St. James Church
125 Harrison Avenue, Boston

Thursday, August 14

Wharf District Central Artery Advisory Committee Meeting — 3:00 P.M.
For location information, contact Stephen Brewer at (617) 951-6552 or smbrewer@bigdig.com.

Monday, August 18

Boston MPO Workshop I — 4:00 P.M.

Boston MPO Workshop II — 5:30 P.M.
Cosponsored by the Waltham Alliance to Create Housing in cooperation with the Waltham Council of Neighborhood Advocates
Government Center
116 School Street, Waltham
(See related article on page 1.)

Thursday, August 21

Boston MPO Workshop I — 4:00 P.M.

Boston MPO Workshop II — 5:30 P.M.
Cosponsored by the Mattapan Community Development Corporation
Mattapan Community Development Corporation
1598 Blue Hill Avenue, Mattapan
(See related article on page 1.)

Meeting dates and times are subject to change: please call (617) 973-7119 for confirmation. Additional transportation meetings open to the public are listed on the Boston MPO Web site, at www.bostonmpo.org.

■ FY 2004 Appropriations *cont. from p. 2*

includes a provision proposed by the Bush administration that changes the local match requirement for New Starts, currently 20 percent, to 50 percent. It also includes language requiring the Federal Transit Administration to take into consideration how a proposed transit project would affect traffic congestion and what the cost per new rider would be.

The bill will be voted on by the full House in September. The Senate Appropriations Committee has not yet approved its companion bill.

TRANSreport

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